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Chapter 2—God's Law

Introduction

Moses came down from Mt. Sinai with tablets of stone in hand, and announced to the children of Israel: "I've got good news and bad news. The good news is that I got God down just to ten rules. The bad news is that adultery is still in."

What is morality about? Does it come from some kind of abstract principles or is it imposed by persons? If imposed by persons, is this arbitrary, or is it based on character? If from character, what is its source? We do not naturally think of God's law as His gift to us, but since His commandments reveal His character, He is giving Himself. Moreover, He knows us better than we know ourselves and only desires what is best for us; thus, He has given us His commandments so we can live well.

I. Morality Implies Persons

One of my favorite movies is *Tombstone*, starring Kurt Russell as Wyatt Earp and Val Kilmer as Doc Holliday. It is the Earps against the cowboys. At the end, Doc Holliday shot Johnny Ringo, who had been the leader of the cowboy gang. Why? It was over immorality. Why didn't the moral principles fight? Moral principles do not exist apart from persons. Bad morality confronts us in bad people, and good morality resides in good persons. A good person gives himself

2 Part 1—*The Beginning and the Law*

to others, thereby being a blessing to them. Such is the case with God.

Some of the world's major religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, do not believe "god" is personal, but that we just reincarnate forever until we merge back into nothingness. Buddhism basically says that the life force of the universe resonates in everything, including us. The only way to know such an impersonal god is to be part of him/it, to be part of that one impersonal essence, to merge with god, but Christians know the Triune God through His persons who reveal themselves to us.¹ In Buddhist pantheism, "god" animates the universe like our souls animate our bodies so that if the universe did not exist, God would not exist. But one cannot take the distinction between good and evil seriously if "god" is both evil and good. Moreover, in this view, "god" has no existence except in the things continually coming and going, "his" only thought is the sum of the thoughts of all finite beings, "his" only life the sum of the lives of all creatures and only emergences in our consciousness. In short, this "god" is only what we make him/it to be and thus no threat to us.

Here is the point: *There is no morality without persons.* Moral principles in the abstract do not exist because all morality is the product of persons in *relationship*. It is the *will* of persons that imposes morality. But that does not mean that morality is arbitrarily agreed upon by persons. All morality is the product of the Triune God *personally*, revealing His moral character and imposing that on us *personally*. God says about His commandments and His own holiness:

¹³ Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, *as* in your ignorance; ¹⁵ but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, ¹⁶ because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:13-16).

¹ We say that the person is distinct from His essence, though inseparable from His essence. In Pantheism, person and essence merge into one.

² Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy." ³ Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I am the LORD your God. ⁴ Do not turn to idols, nor make for yourselves molded gods: I am the LORD your God (Leviticus 19:2-4).

Notice from Leviticus that God's character is revealed by the Ten Commandments, and other passages could be cited.

When we teach our children morality, we are giving ourselves to them out of love. When we pick up our babies and small children, we are handling them, saying sweet words to them to let them know how much we love them, communicating *ourselves* to them. This is precisely what God does when He gives us His commandments; and when God the Father gave us Himself in the person of His Son, He was demonstrating His incredible love to us. One day, our faith will be sight, and we will be able to touch and feel the incarnate Son of God.

If the personal God created us, *we* would expect to be personal, and so we are, made in His image. God as person has intelligence, compassion, creativity, love, justice, communicates with other persons as in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and has many other characteristics. God has all these personal characteristics infinitely, and we have them as creatures, finitely. The way we can have a personal relationship with God is through One who was (is) both God's peer and our peer and bringing the two together in one person. That is, of course, the incarnate Son of God.

Remember the garden in Eden. Adam and Eve were created sinless, what we could describe as "normal." There were God, Adam, Eve, and the serpent, who was the devil. Eve told the devil that God had commanded Adam and her not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, so obviously she knew what sin was. The devil responded that God was holding out on her, that she could eat of it, thereby being equal with God, making up her own moral rules, and that there would be no consequences if she did. God said that

4 Part 1—*The Beginning and the Law*

she and Adam would die if they ate from it, but Satan said they would not die.

To put it another way, the devil essentially said that Eve could abstract the moral principle from God, “Don’t eat from the tree,” and could make it say something like, “Eat from the tree and you will not die.” The devil was saying there were neutral, moral principles, common to her and God, and that she could take or leave those principles. But Eve found out when she sinned that she was confronted with *God*, and that very personally. All morality is the product of the Triune God, *personally* revealing His moral character in His commands and imposing that on us *personally*. But Eve, and then her husband Adam also, quickly discovered that when they disobeyed they were confronted with God *personally*, for He came to them to judge them but also to offer mercy with the promise of the coming redeemer (Genesis 3:15). God is not an abstraction. He takes disobedience personally; it can’t be otherwise. God’s character is tied up in His commands, and a rejection of them is a rejection of Him.

God judged all three (Adam, Eve, Satan), and they were placed under His curse of death. Consequently, Adam and Eve became abnormal, and so mankind continues that way until the Last Day when the curse shall be removed. Those who know Christ have the curse removed from them at death, and even now God is working in their lives to enable them to overcome their sins, to some extent.

It is a given that *we cannot know anyone except by self-revelation*. We can only know God’s morality clearly if He tells us. Think of your friends and relatives whom you love. Did you dream up something about them and then declare that is what they were like? No, you spent time with them, and learned their character by their words and actions. Likewise we cannot simply think about God and fashion Him accordingly, which would be creating a god according to our own image. For example, some people think God must approve certain forms of immorality, such as killing babies, but how do they know this? They just invent such ideas, but the only way to know for sure what God approves is for Him to tell us. The Triune God reveals Himself by written self-revelation in Holy Scripture.

In other words, there are only two ways to think about God: according to what one assumes by human reason, or by what God tells us by revelation. Either our reason is the authority of what God is like, or God is His own authority by revelation. If man's finite reason is the final authority for what can exist, we must further assume that his reason is not skewed by sin, and that man is completely neutral about himself, God, and morality. Now God has to be like the human person thinks He is, and if anyone brings up revelation, that must be tested by his reason. That makes him the God-qualifier so that if someone wants to apply for the job of God, He must meet his human standards.

Likewise, Satan tempted Adam and Eve to begin their reasoning with themselves, to reason from their morality to God, saying they could be their own gods. But they learned that God's thoughts were determinative, not their thoughts.

Have you seen the experiment in which four people are put in a room and asked to say which line on a card matches the length of a line on a similar card? Three of the people are told to lie and pick another line. They always go first. Then the fourth person, who always goes last, has to pick which line matches. Will he conform to the others, or will he tell the truth? Seventy percent of the time, he will go against his own eyes to conform to the others. The point is that we can take or leave abstract principles, but we cannot take or leave *someone*—especially if that someone is the Triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). We have to reckon with Him.

One reason people want to get rid of the infinite personal God is that they don't want to be judged. Abstract moral principles are not threatening. But if there is such a God as we are describing, and He has given us His moral law, which law is a revelation of His own character, and we break His law, that implies judgment. We all know that sinking feeling when we've done something wrong and have to face the boss. If morality were not personal, it would not matter. Some people want objective morality without God because they don't want to be judged.

If morality were just principle and not also personal, there could be no forgiveness. A live wire will shock everyone who touches it

without exception. It cannot make a loving decision to give someone immunity from the consequences, but the Triune God can and does.

Some would like to make up their own Ten Commandments, just like our children would like to make up their own rules. But moral law is His commandments to us to obey *Him*. Every law code implies *someone* behind the code to enforce it.

God and His law are inseparable. Thus, for a school teacher to teach students morality apart from relating to God is to teach them how to sin. There is no neutrality in morality. It is a slap in God's face to pretend that we can do what we wish without taking Him into consideration. In this fabrication, there is no one to answer to, only "principles" that we can change to suit ourselves. But with God's Ten Commandments, we will have to answer to *Him*—a person—at the Last Day, and since He does not change, His moral code does not change. That is scary, and we don't like it so we invent ways around this. But God Himself has given us the way out, which is to trust in Christ who took our judgment on the cross.

To conclude this section, if morality is personal so that we make laws regarding one another, where do the moral motions that we have come from? Why do we even think in terms of moral and immoral? The only rational answer is that our moral inclinations come from the personal God who made us like Him, in His image.

II. Morality Implies Principles

God's morality is not just personal; it is also objective and clearly communicated to us. We may call these moral principles or the Ten Commandments. We can observe the Triune God to some extent in His creation (Romans 1:18ff), and we can see that He loves beauty, is infinitely intelligent, and cares for us, but primarily we know God from His revelation to us in Holy Scripture. This revelation is propositional, which means we know Him by words that are rational, historically and objectively true, documented in Holy Scripture.

Someone will object that there are many holy books, but that is not true. There are only two that claim to be a revelation from the infinite personal God; the Old Testament, which we share with the

Jews, and the New Testament, which is unique to Christians. Islam is a counterfeit religion with a counterfeit book, the *Koran*, taking ideas from both the Old Testament and the New Testament and adding a lot of imagination, so if we count it, there are three such holy books. Another counterfeit religion is Mormonism with its *Book of Mormon* making claims to be from God. But there are only two original books making such claims, the Old Testament and the New Testament, which are really only one book, since the Old Testament is further explained by the New Testament. (For an astonishing comparison of Mormons and Muslims in free pdf file, please send an email to service@footstoolpublications.com.)

One thing that makes the Judeo-Christian heritage unique is that it is rooted in real history, real people who lived in real cities and countries that still exist and are still in the daily news. Moreover, the Bible was written over a period of about 1,500 years by about 40 various human authors, and yet has only one message.

Some will further object that Christians cannot agree on what that message is, but that also is not true. There are three branches of Christianity, Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodoxy, and all three have always held to God as Trinity (one God in three persons), to Jesus Christ as God in the flesh, that He died in His humanity on the cross for our sins, to His bodily resurrection, and to the Ten Commandments as God's unchangeable morality. Our disagreements are over minor points. In other words, we all hold to the Nicene Creed and its objective, verbal statements about the Christian faith.

III. Morality Implies Personal Responsibility

In our culture, no one wants to assume accountability for his actions. Politicians make a career out of blaming one another. Criminals point to society. The National Organization for Women said it was post-partum depression that caused Andrea Yates in 2001 to drown her

five children in the bath tub in Houston. The oldest, a seven year old boy, said “Mommy, have I done something wrong?”²

Justifying oneself while blaming others is as old as humanity, but it has become pandemic in the USA. Everyone wants to shift the blame, disavowing any wrong doing, which is what God said people would do:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. . . . If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us (1 John 1:8, 10).

We are accountable to Him corporately as a nation, and our actions contribute to our national righteousness (or lack thereof). We are accountable to Him as individuals in our private lives; our actions and even our thoughts are subject to His omniscient scrutiny. There is no area of our lives where we have the right of private choice, where we can be autonomous individuals with no accountability to anyone but ourselves. This is God’s world, He is the creator, His holy character as revealed in His holy law is the only standard both public and private, and we are accountable to Him for every word (Matthew 12:36). We are all tied together, and whatever what does in public or in private affects our culture.

IV. How Many Moral Systems Are There?

Lewis Carroll the logician (real name: Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) said through the cat and Alice in *Alice in Wonderland*:

“But I don’t want to go among mad people,” Alice remarked.

“Oh, you can’t help that,” said the Cat: “we’re all mad here. I’m mad. You’re mad.”

“How do you know I’m mad?” said Alice.

² Tammy Bruce, *The Death of Right and Wrong* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2003), p. 62ff. (See my comments on this book in the Bibliography at the end of the book.)

"You must be," said the Cat, "or you wouldn't have come here."

"And how do you know that you're mad?"

"To begin with," said the Cat, "a dog's not mad. You grant that?"

"I suppose so," said Alice.

"Well, then," the Cat went on, "you see, a dog growls when it's angry, and wags its tail when it's pleased. Now I growl when I'm pleased, and wag my tail when I'm angry. Therefore I'm mad."

Couched in that absurd exchange is an important illustration about relativism. What is the unchanging standard whereby all things are measured and understood? If the dog is the ultimate standard, the cat is mad; but if the cat is the ultimate standard, the dog is mad. Hence, someone is always the standard for someone else, and by some other standard, we're all mad. In other words, if there is no objective, unchanging standard for what is normal, then no one is normal. As I said earlier, if there is no vertical standard, the horizontal cannot be defined.

A. Humans Cannot Create Moral Law

Moreover, *just as we cannot create physical law into existence, so we cannot create moral law into existence*, and to think that we can only reveals that we believe the lie of the devil to Eve: "You shall be as God, knowing [or determining] good and evil." (Genesis 3:5, for more comments on this verse see page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**, and read the paragraph beginning with "Wanting to be God.") Since the fall of man into sin in the garden in Eden, man has deceived himself into thinking that he can make up his own ethics without incurring consequences, but the past few thousand years demonstrate otherwise. Nevertheless, he continues his restless pursuit of private morality independent from God, so that he does not have to give account. This is why we find people engaging in rationalizing and self-justification when they are caught doing something wrong; they

think they are above judgment, living under the system of morality they allegedly created.

It seems that the religion of self is the dominant religion in the USA. In our culture, we are being taught to look for god inside ourselves, and there is nothing more exhilarating in our day than for one to find himself, to find his own true meaning in life, and to find his own ethic, to be true to himself, or to find his own credo. This longing for personal divinity is one reason sexual sins are so eagerly embraced. Once a person “discovers” he is a god, he intuitively understands that he is free to create an ethic of eroticism. Aldous Huxley comes to mind. He was the fierce atheist, who authored *Brave New World* and a number of other popular volumes. In his book *Ends and Means*, Huxley wrote the following, “For myself . . . the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation . . . sexual . . . [and] political.”³ Our culture loves pretended autonomy. For one to challenge such libertine expressions in another’s chosen lifestyle is virtually the unpardonable sin, for it attacks his own divinity.

B. Only One Law-Giver

But there is only one God who exists, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, there is only one moral law and one law giver, not two or more:

There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy
(James 4:12).

Thus every “moral law” enacted by mankind (whether Congress or a local church or an individual) is either an *application* of God’s law or an *act of rebellion*. Those who pursue their own morality necessarily self-destruct against God’s law (Proverbs 11:5), against His morality, under His judgment. Indeed, the battle of the ages is whose moral law rules? All conflicts between Christians and others in society are ultimately rooted in the debate over whose law is supreme. Mankind resents being finite so he pretends his own divinity to invent his own moral law. *This is the main problem in society as a whole*. Our alternatives are God’s law or man’s law, and man hates

³ Harper & Brothers Publishers; Fifth Edition, (1937), p. 273.

God's law because it interferes with his sinful desires, especially sexual desires. Therefore, we have cosmic war over morality. You will notice how our society hates the Bible and prefers its own morality, often making fun of the Bible (which reveals an attitude but is not an argument against it) and those who believe it.

God's Ten Commandments are like electricity: a man can be blessed if he obeys them in the context of believing the Gospel, or the only other option is to be "electrocuted" by them. The "proof" that God's morality is the only one is the impossibility of living life without assuming His morality; otherwise, we are "electrocuted," we self-destruct.

Since all systems of morality imply a person or persons behind that system, multiple and contradicting law systems imply multiple persons in conflict with one another, which is what we have in Western culture. Indeed, multiple law systems imply a god behind each system, which leads to polytheism, many gods, each competing in the market place. Another name for this is pluralism or diversity. Thus, in Western culture, we now have polytheism (many gods), pluralism (many systems of morality), and sweeping moral instability. The only way to have peace in society is for everyone to worship the one true God with His one moral law; otherwise, people have conflicts while trying to impose their morality on others.

To restate this, *a society's god is revealed by the source of its law*, by the highest law of the land. We are at war, spiritually, and each side is exclusive in its claims, Christianity proclaiming the Lordship of Christ, and the secular gods proclaiming "neutrality" with the ACLU and government arbitrating who can say what in the public arena, with hate speech advocates increasingly denying that we can quote the Bible regarding certain sins. Make no mistake, that both sides are exclusive in their claims, "intolerant" for their position of truth. Already one preacher in Canada has been jailed for hate speech when he proclaimed that gay relationships were sinful, even though the Church has been saying that for 2,000 years, and has the mandate to do such under His sovereign Majesty, the King of kings. The issue is which god is God, the secular gods or the Christ, the government or the Son of the living God?

C. No Values

I hate the word “values,” for it implies no standard, just arbitrary choices. God does not allow moral neutrality, for *His law is a revelation of His character that cannot change* (1 Peter 1:13-16), and He is not neutral. I’ll never forget during the Colonel North hearings on TV back in the late 1980s what one bushy-eyed senator said to Col. North: “God does not take sides in politics.” It is difficult to imagine a more ignorant and arrogant statement. If that were true, the Lord God would have to apologize for destroying Sodom and Gomorrah, the Canaanite nations, as well as Rome, and Hitler’s Germany. Moreover, neutrality would imply that God’s character did not matter; it would imply that it was acceptable for Hitler to murder millions of Jews and many Christians.

But the Scriptures assert that

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to *any* people (Proverbs 14:34).

And “sin” is defined by God in His commandments (1 John 3:4). Thus, *Christians do not believe in “values,”* for these are human preferences that can change, created by humans, but the whole world has imposed on it God’s Ten *Commandments*, given by revelation, not His Ten *Suggestions*. Any person or nation that does not live by these will self-destruct, and moreover God’s judgment is on him/them to curse them at the Last Day judgment, unless they trust in Christ who took our judgment.

If we are careful in applying the truth that every system of morality originates from a god, it will become clear that believing in “values” is idolatry, for it implies a strange god or gods. “Values” implies that ethics are arbitrary, that there are many legitimate systems and each person or nation may choose his own moral rules. But if any system is legitimate then nothing is absolute, meaning all is arbitrary. If there are many law givers, there are many gods.

According to atheistic philosopher Nietzsche:

The noble type of man regards HIMSELF as a determiner of values; he does not require to be approved of; he passes the judgment: ‘What is injurious to me is injurious in itself’; he

knows that it is he himself only who confers honor on things; he is a CREATOR OF VALUES. He honors whatever he recognizes in himself: such morality equals self-glorification.⁴

In other words, Nietzsche gloried in being one who created his own ethics, but then he spent most of his life fighting the Crucified One, hating Christianity with an unholy passion, and died insane.⁵

Nietzsche and others looked at morality as pins in a pin cushion that could be removed or replaced at will. The “pins” were particular moral principles, and the “cushion” would be the moral system. In other words, morality had no unity, but was just more or less arbitrary rules.

D. Only One Moral Law

But *God's law is really not so much the Ten Commandments but one command, for He is one, the only God, and thus there can only be one moral law. The Ten Commandments are really one law, each commandment containing all the others, each commandment reflecting that one law. His law is like white light: one can put a prism in front of it to break it down into its various hues though it is still just one. Jesus gave two “hues” to the law, to love God and mankind:*

³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And he said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:35-40, ESV).

Or we can break this one law into ten “hues,” the Ten Commandments. But like white light, the law is really one, each commandment implying the others. It is like a chain; grab any link, and

⁴ Frederich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Planet PDF format, p. 256. Emphasis his.

⁵ For an interesting presentation of Nietzsche's life and thought, see Alistair Kee, *Nietzsche Against the Crucified*. I don't recommend this work for the faint of heart, for it glories in Nietzsche's ungodly thought.

you have the whole chain. The Ten Commandments are not multiple choices.

This means there is a sense in which if we break any of the Ten Commandments we have broken them all:

For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all (James 2:10).

For example, if someone steals, he is an idolater (first command) who has considered creation worth more than God (second command), taken God's name in vain, thinking he can get away with it (third command), made light of sanctifying all his time to God and of the infinite time he'll spend in hell (fourth command), dishonored godly authority (fifth command), not promoted the life and well being of his neighbor (sixth command), dishonored human relationships (seventh command), stolen (eighth command), had to lie to do it (ninth command), and coveted (tenth command). We could do this for each commandment.

The unity of God's law means that if one breaks any command, he comes under the *one* penalty of the one law, physical and spiritual death.

Moreover, there is no sin that is not represented in the Ten Commandments. They are *comprehensive*, for God has not left anything uncovered, at least in principle. To put this another way, in contrast to our laws where the Congress adds thousands of pages to the federal register each year, God has only ten rules, as it were. These are paradigmatic, a model, a pattern. One can extrapolate from them to any situation. God's morality is simple whereas ours is complex. I can just about guarantee that you have broken some federal laws today, and you do even know what they are.

But as one man has succinctly stated:

“The significance of the Ten Commandments and their influence on American culture can be observed from the White Plains (NY) Reporter, dated September 19, 1929:

“No man in more than two thousands years has been able to improve upon the Ten Commandments as

the rule of life. To no other origin than to Divine Revelation can they be ascribed. Man constantly improves upon his own handiwork. *There never will be a need for an Eleventh Commandment.* The Ten Contain all there is to guide human conduct in the proper channels.”

In more recent American history (January 1983), Federal Judge John C. Knox, whose jurisdiction included New York City, stated in a public address that the laws of this republic were founded on the Ten Commandments.⁶

The Ten Commandments are not only not obsolete, they are absolute.

But non-Christians think of the world as having compartments with various gods over various areas. The Jesus God is over the Church, the anything-goes god over sexuality, the educational god over public schools, and the government god over all as moderator, and each of these gods has its own law code.

Another system of pluralism is that many people seek to have an end-justifies-the-means ethic. (Later, we shall discuss Peter Singer who justifies infanticide and euthanasia with this ethic. See Chapter 12 on the Sixth Commandment.) For now let us just consider how to view such an ethic, for it basically says that we should seek the greatest pleasure for the greatest number of people. Here are some objections to this:

- We could justify murdering a sector of the population if the majority agreed and it brought them pleasure.
- Should there be an equal distribution of pleasure?
- How can a person determine what brings pleasure to all unless he knew what all wanted at any one point in time?
- Would not the definition of pleasure change all the time?

⁶ Mark F. Rooker, *The Ten Commandments: Ethics for the Twenty-First Century* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010), p. 2. Emphasis added.

- Moreover, we would have to be able to trace the consequences of an action into the indefinite future to see if it continued to bring pleasure.

This type ethic requires the ethicist to be omniscient, to be God, to be able to know the hearts of all people at any given moment to put the rule into effect. But unless the rule comes from God, how can we know that any rule will give more pleasure than pain throughout all history?⁷

Still others have an ethic of self-realization where all reality is one, as in Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism where all things merge. In these religions there is no Creator/creature distinction, just one being, one reality, which ultimately means no right or wrong, for everything came from one and will merge back into one regardless what we do.

V. Is There Natural Moral Law?

The Lone Ranger and Tonto went camping in the desert. After they set up their tent, both men fell sound asleep.

Some hours later, Tonto wakes the Lone Ranger and says. "Kemo Sabe, look towards sky, what you see?"

The Lone Ranger replies, "I see millions of stars."

"What that tell you?" asked Tonto.

The Lone Ranger ponders for a minute then says, "*Astronomically* speaking, it tells me there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. *Astrologically*, it tells me that Saturn is in Leo. *Time wise*, it appears to be approximately a half past three in the morning. *Theologically*, the Lord is all-powerful and we are small and insignificant. *Meteorologically*, it seems we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What's it tell you Tonto?"

⁷ John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p. 99. I discovered this book after I had written mine, and it is amazing how much we think alike. I've used some of his thoughts in the book in places.

“Kemo Sabe, you dumb as rock. We get in tent earlier, no see stars. Now see stars. It tell me someone stole tent!”

A. What Is Human Natural Law?

But what is natural law? With some, natural law is the right of the individual to decide moral issues without judges or legislation getting in the way. It is just the individual and his conscience. There is no static set of timeless truths, but each individual and each culture morphs into various standards according to the times. Thus for someone to tell a woman that she should not have an abortion is a violation of her right to choose for herself; it is forcing one's morality on another. Of course, they don't want to talk about forcing their morality of choice on a baby who then dies. This choice is especially demanded in the area of sexuality. This is what Judge Bork in his excellent book *Slouching Towards Gomorrah* calls a radical egalitarianism, which means no one can say anyone is wrong about their choices, for all are equal, and there is no God. But if each can choose, what should we do about murder? Government steps in, as it should, but this only reveals that it is impossible to have complete autonomy; there must be limits on what one can choose. How do we define those limits?⁸

With others natural law is the government ruling according to social norms, and the Constitution must be interpreted by those norms. In this view, the Constitution is reinterpreted with each new generation, and this is the way it should be, they think. But this means the Constitution is not really a binding standard, just a wax nose to be manipulated.

With still others, natural law can be an unchanging norm that is discovered by some human process that is devoid of divine input. They would say that there are moral absolutes, such as not murdering one another. But there are so many things that people cannot agree to that this seems hopeless.

⁸ Another way to say this is to ask if law is normative or descriptive? If it is normative, there is an unchangeable standard; but if it is just descriptive, then it only “describes” what people do.

The problem with natural law in each case is that man *discovers* it based on who he is rather than it being *revealed* based on who God is. Suppose all morality was just natural law, which means we just discover it by ourselves, or make it up as we go along. The first problem is the source for it, for if the world is just molecules in motion, how could immaterial morality arise from matter? If nature is all there is, then the ways things are is the way they should be.⁹ Thus if one is born homosexual, that is the way it should be. Of course, we deny that one is born homosexual but that people choose that lifestyle.

A second problem, if morality is just discovered, is that it is just conventions agreed to, for the moment. How do we get others to “discover” it, and who will enforce it? What happens if we can’t agree? If no one enforces it, then we have nothing. If we just discover it, how do we explain that all cultures punish people for murder and theft, and look down on adultery? This flux of morality would be like the murderer who thought it was unfair to be prosecuted because he was doing what was “natural,” according to what his wisdom had discovered. Some were predators and some prey. He was a predator, so why punish him? We don’t punish wolves for being wolves, do we? Moreover, if morality was just a product of people thinking it up, whose thoughts would prevail? It would seem that we would be subject to majority vote so that the next time a Hitler arose, if he had enough votes, murdering Jews and Christians would be acceptable. But we all know that no amount of rational argument can justify murder, or can it? (See Chapter 12 on the Sixth Commandment.)

A third problem is that if moral law is based on human nature, whose human nature? The position usually assumes evolution, which means human nature is constantly changing as it evolves. In fact, some will be more “advanced” than others in their genetic evolution, and all will be different a thousand years from now. What will morality be like then? By contrast, we can trace God’s absolute moral law back thousands of years from now, and it has not changed because He has not changed.

⁹ Philosophers say it this way: What is, is the way it ought to be.

“Modernist lawmaking is based not on morality but on ‘utility’ and ‘rights.’”¹⁰ In other words, it is very subjective; it is not concerned with righteousness but with what makes people feel good, what people want. When we give up the objective standard of righteousness, society goes to war to fight over whose rights get upheld and whose rights are violated. This view creates moral civil war. People will say dumb things like “people can do what they wish as long as it does not hurt anyone.” But that is just the point: All sin hurts those who do it and consequently those around them with whom they have interaction, both public and private.

B. What Is Biblical Natural Law?

But in another sense we can say there is natural moral law if by that we mean that we are made in God’s image, consequently we have the “memory” as it were of His morality stamped in us. The Apostle Paul put it this way:

¹⁴ for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*) ¹⁶ in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel (Romans 2:14-16).

The passage teaches us several things. First, the law that Paul says the Gentiles have is nothing other than God’s commandments; that is clear from the context. In the verses that follow, Paul mentions stealing, adultery, idolatry, and perhaps other commandments. It is therefore not a different law, a “neutral” moral law that the Gentiles or non-Christians dreamed up or discovered. Second, Paul does not say they have the law in their hearts but the “*work* of the law written in their hearts,” which is its effects. In other words, the very fact that they have a conscience that accuses and excuses indicates that they

¹⁰ Philip E. Johnson, *Reason in the Balance* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), p. 139.

are made in His image. Animals don't think about and debate morality. Accusations and excuses are activities that evidence moral consciousness, the only rationale of which is the effect of God's law in their hearts.¹¹ And the fact that their conscience functions with the assumptions of God's Ten Commandments indicates that they really know God, at least in one sense (Romans 1:21). But they don't want to know Him because they love their sin (John 3:19-20) so they suppress the truth about Him and His morality. Here is how Paul put it earlier in Romans:

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:18-20).

God's existence and morality are "clearly seen" in creation, but they do not want it so they "suppress" it by means of unrighteous practices, saying that they are "free" to do as they like. Sinning boldly is a challenge to God that He is not in charge; they are. Likewise, the Triune God is "manifest in them," in their conscience as seen in trying to suppress His knowledge as they try to get rid of this constant reminder by giving themselves over to wickedness. Their sinful desires are driving their minds; they are not neutrally investigating morality. Their minds are enslaved to their immorality. What their hearts love, their wills embrace, and their minds justify. They suppress God's existence by devising alternative theories for our existence, such as evolution, which leaves them "free" to devise alternative theories of morality. In the same passage, here is what Paul says they wish to practice:

¹¹ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1959), 1:55-56.

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their [females] exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. ²⁷ Likewise also the [males], leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due (Romans 1:26-27).

Notice how I translated “women” and “men” above as “females” and “males.” There were several choices Paul the Apostle had in words for women and men, but he uses the rare word for “female” and the more certain word for “male” because he is making a deliberate connection to Genesis 1:27 in the Greek translation of the Old Testament where these same Greek words are used:

So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

The original creation, Paul implies, was one male and one female. That is the standard.

Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, demonstrates from dozens of sources from classical Greek (Plato and others), from Jewish sources between the Old and New Testaments, and from those outside the New Testament who nevertheless lived during the time of the Apostles,¹² that “natural use” and “against nature” were set phrases that referred to heterosexual and homosexual behavior respectively with no known exceptions.¹³

But the point is that they cannot live in God’s world without assuming His existence and His morality, for they self-destruct (“receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due”). This “error” would seem to be apostasy from God, then “burning,” which is ever increasing and intense lusts that can never be satisfied, that finally leads to diseases from aberrant sexual practices (Exodus 15:26; Leviticus 26:16) and to final judgment at the Last Day. Moreover, such practices lead them to mental distress, depression, and to

¹² Such as Philo and Josephus.

¹³ Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (Nashville: Abington Press, 2001), 500 plus pages. See especially chapter four.

suicide, which is very high among homosexuals. Insider Tammy Bruce reports that male homosexuals are pursuing unprotected sex even when they know it will lead to disease,¹⁴ which is a death wish. This is a rebellion to God that they can do as they please without consequences. His response is to turn them over to their lusts for destruction and to a warped mind:

²⁴ Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves . . . ²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to vile passions . . . ²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting (Romans 1:24, 26, 28).

This dishonoring of God leads to the dishonoring of self. Though not every idolater gives himself (or herself) to same sex unions, Paul seems to be saying that just as those who reject God suppress the truth about Him (v. 18), so many who reject Him also suppress the truth about same sex unions. Therefore, three times we see that God gave them over to their lusts and to a debased and warped mind. If they reject Him, His creation, and His morality, He will reject them, but if they reach out to Him, He will forgive and heal (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Therefore, *in two areas they suppress the truth* so as to distort the natural law of their conscience: (1) they devise alternative theories of our origin, denying creation and the Creator, (2) which in turn leads them to devise alternative theories of morality, denying their conscience, the image of God within them, and God's morality.

Secularists accuse Christians of trying to impose "religion" on society, for wanting to impose *our* morality. First, as we just saw above, there is only one morality—God's. Second, if God's morality

¹⁴ Tammy Bruce, *The Death of Right and Wrong* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2003), p. 96ff. The movement is known as "bareback," risking and even seeking to get some disease as a badge of honor to one's freedom and challenge to God's authority. (See my comments on this book in the Bibliography at the end of the book.)

is the only one, He has already imposed it. Third, the secularists are imposing *their* ungodly morality on society, and they are doing so in the name of their god – secularism. It is not a question of imposing; it is only a question of *who* is imposing *what*.

Of course we can argue for God's morality to our culture without using Scripture, but we cannot argue for it without assuming Scripture.¹⁵ Christians become embarrassed over believing the Bible so they want to distance themselves from it when dealing with non-Christians. It seems better to assume it and then argue one's case, for that is what God Himself does in scripture. Non-Christians don't get to determine the evidence or how we present it to them; God does.

Thus, there is no natural, morally neutral law that is for all faiths. The reason should be obvious: human nature is fallen, which means the hearts of all people are sinful so that there is no neutral moral law code *in* our hearts but rather a law giver *over* our hearts – the Triune God. To assert that there is neutral morality implies a god who is neutral, but we have seen that such thinking is rebellious to the one and only Triune God who is infinitely holy, not neutral. Here is how Jeremiah put it:

The heart is deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9).

VI. Law and Love

Most people do not associate God's law with love nor do they think that God's law and freedom go together. But God's law is His gift to show us how to love, what evil is, how to live, and how to have the greatest freedom both personally and in our culture.

First, let us ask what love is. We see an example of true love in the best known verse in the Bible:

God so **loved** the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

¹⁵ John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), p. 242ff.

This demonstrates at least one thing that love is: unconditional commitment to another person or persons to do them good, “good” being defined by God. Love is making oneself vulnerable to others for their good. It is willing to be hurt to help those who hurt us, which is the ultimate in unselfishness. Christ came to be killed, to give His life for our sins, and then to rise from the dead. At His Second Coming, He will judge others, but for now, He is gracious to us.

But what is love? Where does it come from? What is the standard for love? And why do we consider love so important that we’ll even buy pets to love, thus revealing that we want to be loved and have a need to love something else or someone? Now I’ll give you ten seconds to answer these questions. Time is up. What is love, and where does it come from? There can be no love without a moral standard. We hear a lot about love, especially towards those who are practicing some sin. A nurse at a doctor’s office asked me a pointed question: “Why does your denomination take such a hard nosed stance against gay people?” It was a good question. But I responded that we don’t take a mean stance; we take a loving stand.

Since I was in a doctor’s office, I used a medical illustration. I said, “Suppose someone comes in here with a disease from which he will die, but there is a cure that works every time. You have to convince the person that he has this disease, which few will admit. But if you don’t tell him, is that love?” She got the point. We love the gay community, but God says they must repent of that sin, the same as we must repent of our sins. Love, as defined by God in the Scriptures, and more specifically the Ten Commandments, dictates that we tell them. To do otherwise would be unloving.

Second, how is God’s law the standard for love? We might not think that God gave us His law out of love, but He indeed did! This is like you training your two year old son to obey you so he will not be hurt: “Don’t touch the hot stove,” or “Don’t hit your sister,” which would be consideration of others and thus love for others. We are loving and protecting our children when we instruct them or spank them. God’s moral commandments were given to us because He loves us and wants what is best for us.

To put it another way, *love is obedience to God’s law*:

For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, are *all* summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:9-10).

It is not love to commit adultery. It is not love to murder. It is not love to steal, lie, covet, and so on. Therefore, we see that love is primarily *volition*; that is, it has to do with our will. The engine is our determination to obey God, and the caboose is our emotions that are fickle. For example, when two people marry, they make a vow, a commitment, to love one another until death, and since love is volition, they can *choose* to keep their vow. To restate this, *we* control our love; the *object* of our love does not control our love. Indeed, we can even love our enemies since we control our own love (Matthew 5:44-45).

Some would justify anything by love. After 35 years in the ministry, I've heard people justify adultery because they “loved” the new person and fell out of love with the original spouse, but that is love subjectively defined, especially by one's feelings. But if we define love as obedience to God's law, we see that it is objective and volitional. Love *chooses* to keep God's law, and sin *chooses* to break it.

I've watched sitcoms where a son or daughter comes to a parent and asks how one knows if he is in love. There is the usual silence, cough, and then the nonsense: “You *just* know.” But we've seen that love is not that way; it is objective, defined by God's law, which also defines evil. We know we're in love when we *choose* to love. We choose to love our parents and siblings without choosing who they would be so we can surely choose to love our spouses.

VII. What Is Sin?

Some think evil is *natural disasters*, such as hurricanes and earthquakes. These surely take their toll, but to define evil in this manner does not address the wrongs we do in our thoughts, words, and ac-

tions. We can do little to nothing about preventing natural disasters. We do not think of punishing hurricanes. Natural disasters are the result of evil that has come into the world (Romans 8:20-22), not evil itself. God uses natural disasters to warn us of our immoral behavior, to get us to repent, to call us to Himself (Luke 13:1-5).

Others think it is evil to be *finite*, to be a creature, so they imagine they are god, part of the oneness of all things, as promoted in the New Age movement and in Hinduism. But the Bible presents us as creatures and only the Triune God as sovereign. He is unique; we are not. There is a Creator/creature distinction that cannot be breached. It is not wrong, therefore, to be finite. God made us that way.

Christianity sees evil as *moral*, (not metaphysical), and that being finite is okay. Immorality is defined as rebellion against the Triune God's commandments. Morality is keeping His commands.

Also, since morality is personal, sin is personal, and that means sin is personal *rebellion* against the Triune God. Sin means that we arrange our existence around ourselves, deliberating leaving God out. It is like the teen who comes home from school and tells his mother that he is going out, and when she asks where he is going, he says "None of your business." In other words, he accepts food, clothing, shelter, and even life itself from his mother, but scorns her authority. Is this not what many do today regarding God? They accept His benefits but reject His authority? Evil is rebellion against God's goodness.

VIII. How Universal Is Sin?

How do we explain that everyone has a streak of meanness, selfishness, pride, lust, unjustified anger, lack of love, and just plain bad behavior? No one is exempt, from the baby who is self-centered to the adult who murders or who does so at least in thought, wanting others dead for personal, vindictive reasons. Indeed, we do not love others or the Triune God but love ourselves as the highest good. Like Adam and Eve in their first sin, we all want to be independent of our maker, to be our own god, making up our own rules as we go along.

Some try to explain this away, even saying that babies are born without sin (So why abort them?), but then we must ask why babies die if they are without sin? Christians have the answer: “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). All people are connected with Adam, the first human; and when he sinned, his disobedience and death were imputed to us. To restate this, we are all connected back to our first parents (Romans 5:12-23).

Some will claim this is not fair, but then think nothing of punishing a whole nation for the sins of its leaders, intuitively knowing there is a connection, a representation of the whole country in its leaders, an implicit approval of the sins of the leaders by the citizens. An Enron goes down, and though the employees are not directly guilty of the sins of the officers of the corporation, they still suffer the penalty of the officers' sins. In a similar way (though not exactly), we are guilty of the first sin of Adam as seen in our embracing other sins as soon as we're born. We identify with his rebellion; we love our sin and hate God's righteousness (John 3:18-21).

People may bellow that such a connection is not fair, but the same is true of our connection with Christ—those who trust in Him have His righteousness imputed to them. They receive the free gift of eternal life by trusting Him as their head. There is only one alternative: make it to heaven on our own, which can't be done (Ephesians 2:8-9), for even one sin disqualifies us, and we come into the world with one sin, Adam's eating of the forbidden fruit.

But we are all born with a sinful character. We may develop that character for better or for worse, but we come into the world already marred. For example, I've never met a parent who said he had to teach his child how to sin; they come into the world as experts!

It seems to me that universal sin is one Christian doctrine that is empirically verifiable, for no one but Christ had no bad points to his character—not even Mother Teresa. We all find within ourselves a struggle with that which we know to be good, but we don't want to practice it. We are all inconsistent and unrighteous, yelling at others

for no good reason or just wanting our way. We all have a streak of meanness in us.¹⁶

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) popularized John Dryden's (1631-1700) statement of the "noble savage," believing that those who had no contact with the outside world would not learn the sins of the outside world. In other words, sin was not inherent but only learned by example, which in turn means there is no character, only isolated acts of our wills that do not reveal a sinful bent. If one could control the environment, he could control the isolated acts.

Enter Robert Owen (1771-1858),¹⁷ who in the early 1800s bought property in Indiana and set up a colony (New Harmony) whereby he would create a perfect environment. Owen thought that if he eliminated three evils: traditional religion (attack against the Church), conventional marriage (attack against the family), and private property (attack against free citizenship)—especially private property—that man's so-called sinful problems would disappear. (The Eighth Commandment gives us the right to own private property.) But as soon as the colony was established and a constitution was written, it fell apart. He thought that since man was allegedly born good, controlling the circumstances and educating him would lead to utopia. But he could not get the people to attend his schools without compulsion, which violated his view of the autonomous, good individual. The colony self-destructed in no time, and he returned to his native Britain, having used up his considerable fortune trying to establish other colonies elsewhere with the same results, and died disillusioned and penniless. *He discovered that man cannot be his own savior.*

From the assumption that man is born good, modern day liberals, following Owen, believe that the problem is external, in the envi-

¹⁶ A very interesting book on original sin that surveys various persons and cultures is Alan Jacobs, *Original Sin* (New York, NJ: Harper Collins, 2008). This is not just a pragmatic approach, but he delves into various secular and Christian theories, along with great insight into how cultures stand or fall with their view of original sin. Highly recommended; Jacobs is evangelical. A not so good book, written from a secular view, is Gary A. Anderson, *Sin: A History*. His theory is that almsgiving is how we atone for our sins.

¹⁷ Alan Jacobs, *Original Sin*, pp. 173ff.

ronment. Change that and man will be changed, saved from his own problems. Thus, the means to such change is education, for if man is good, he only needs to know what to do, and then he will choose it. Authority is basically not needed in education; each student, being good, is his own authority. The modern educational system, therefore, seeks to save us by getting rid of traditional religion with its authority, redefining marriage and sexuality, and promoting the idea that the government owns all things, which means no private property. The government and man is the only savior, with the government claiming to be god. (It is telling that virtually every man-made alternative to God's salvation includes some form of sexual deviance from His norm as given in the Seventh Commandment: one man and one woman in marriage for life.)

Christianity takes the opposite view: man is born sinful; therefore, the problem is internal, we are changed by Christ internally, need godly authority to make us learn godly behavior and to hold us accountable. Christ is the only savior.

These two systems are mutually exclusive and are at war spiritually, and only one can be the final winner. We know that Christ is that winner, for He is Lord of all!

Conclusion

We may not think of God's Ten Commandments as the gift of Himself, but since morality is personal, it is precisely that. The Ten Commandments reveal the loving character of God. Moreover, these laws are principles, by which we mean truth-statements, verbal, objective, clear, unchanging, and revealed by a loving God for our good. Let us love Him by loving His commandments. **AMEN.**